In July 2010 I was fortunate to attend a month-long seminar on Jewish Medical Ethics at the Schlesinger Institute in Jerusalem, Israel.

The Schlesinger Institute for Medical-Halachic Research, run on the premises and under the auspices of Shaare Zedek Medical Centre in Jerusalem, is involved in research and education of medical professionals, Rabbis and the public on topics pertaining to medicine, ethics and Jewish law. One of the highlights of the Institute’s educational activities is a 4-week long seminar in the Northern Hemisphere summer for English-speaking medical students from all around the world.

The seminar was divided into four broad topics, corresponding to the four weeks of the program:

- **Week 1: Introduction to Jewish Medical Ethics and Treatment of Patients on the Jewish Sabbath**
  - What are ethics? What is Jewish medical ethics? Science vs. religion: what do you do when they collide

- **Week 2: Beginning of Life and Gynecological issues**, including topics such as:
  - Assisted reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and artificial insemination (AI), sperm and ovum donation, cloning foetal reduction in multiple pregnancies, stem cell research

- **Week 3: Psychiatry and Patient-Physician relationship**, including:
  - Medical mistakes and malpractice, psychopathology of extreme religious behaviour, in the context of disorders such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

- **Week 4: End of life issues**
  - Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, triage and allocation of scarce resources, truth-telling, determination of death

Topics were presented by experts in their field, including doctors, Rabbis specializing in medical Jewish law and people with both medical and rabbinical training.

Although all the lecturers were excellent, I particularly enjoyed hearing from Prof. Abraham Abraham, a practicing pediatrician with rabbinical who has written extensively on the topics of medicine and Jewish Law, and Prof. Abraham Steinberg, winner of an Israel Prize for his encyclopaedia on Medicine and Jewish Law. It was also a privilege to hear from the director of the hospital, Dr. Jonathan Levy, who spoke to the group about the Israeli healthcare system (an interesting topic in itself!).

In addition to seminar lectures and activities, we also had a tour of the hospital and went on several ward rounds, including neonatology and geriatrics. I found it very interesting to compare and contrast another medical and hospital system with the the Australian system. I also had the opportunity to hear about different medical schools around the world as well from other participants in the program.

I gained a lot from participating in this seminar, but most of all I feel that I managed to gain both an appreciation of the complexity of these medical issues from both a secular and Jewish ethical perspective. I think that these issues, and the ethical and religious view of them, are often oversimplified, and can only be understood well with an thorough knowledge of all the ‘facts’ and literature.

I hope that I can share the knowledge I gained with my peers at Monash, and I would like to thank the Monash medical faculty for their support in enabling me to participate in this program.